Theatrical Entertainments

CONSISTENT WITH

Society, Morality, and Religion,

IN

A LETTER to the AUTHOR

OF

"The STAGE the High Road to Hell."

SHEWING

That Writer's Arguments to be fallacious, his Principles enthuſiaſtic, and his Authorities (particularly from the Ancients) miſconſtrued and perverted.

WITH

A COUNTER-DEDICATION to the Rev. Mr. MADAN.

"Bleſs us—what a Word on
"A Title-Page is this!" MILTON.

"*Tantum Religio potuit ſuadere?*" LUCR.

LONDON,

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MDCCLXVIII.

BRITISH
MUSEUM

TO

DAVID GARRICK, AND GEO. COLMAN, ESQRS.

TO WHOSE LABORS

THE ENGLISH STAGE IS CONSIDERABLY INDEBTED,

THIS DEFENSE OF IT

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY THEIR OBEDIENT

HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

☞ *The aſteriſk in page* 6, *line* 11, *refers to the preceding ſentence.*

DEDICATION

TO THE

Rev. Mr. MADAN.

REVEREND SIR,

IF the author of the ſheets which give riſe to the following Eſſay is not abſolutely conſigned to oblivion, you muſt remember that he cenſured the improvements of Taſte as deluſions of Worldly Refinement, and particularly levelled his rage at the productions of the Drama.—Now, as I am convinced that the latter, when properly regulated, are innocent, if not beneficial recreations; I was determined to ſtand in the gap againſt this modern Hiſtriomaſtix, who inherits all the venom, without the learning, of his predeceſſor the voluminous Mr. PRYNNE.

As to his objections and my anſwers I have only this to obſerve, that there is nothing new on either ſide, except the quotations he has made from the ancients, which are ſo new.

(as I ſhall prove by confronting him with his authorities) that the ancients and the moderns are equally ſtrangers to them: and, had it not been for his unparallelled effrontery in impoſing ſuch lying quotations on the public, I ſhould have permitted him to travel thro' his High Road by himſelf.

"All Arts," ſays he, "are proofs of hu-"man degeneracy:" for a ſolution of which ſage poſition, he directs us to the condition of man before the Fall.—But a ſtate of perfection, ſuch as he muſt be underſtood to have then enjoyed, is unfairly introduced as a proof that thoſe arts aroſe from corruption, which reflect the higheſt honor on our degraded ſituation, where excellence can be only comparative.

The ideas formed by the heathens in general, and the immortal Plato in particular, of the privileges originally annexed to humanity, may be termed romantic and inconcluſive, from their foundation at beſt in conjectural plauſibility. A body not ſuſceptible of injuries, and a mind fraught with intuitive knowledge, were excellent appendages of exiſtence; but the poſſeſſion of wings ſo kindly indulged by the ſame philoſopher carries not the mark of ſerious reaſoning, the want of them being but a ridiculous proof of human imperfection.

Art, ſo far from proving the corruption of Nature, muſt rather be conſtrued the off-

ſpring

ſpring of that native dignity which ſpurs the ſoul to exertions moſt worthy of a rational being; though I have charity enough to imagine, the writer meant not to inſinuate, that where Ignorance and Barbarity triumph, Corruption muſt neceſſarily be expelled.

But of all arts "the Theatrical is moſt "corrupt, becauſe it ſhews a fallen crea-"ture to himſelf, and excites paſſions in-"ſtead of ſuppreſſing them."

It had been happier for our author, to have omitted the diſcuſſion of viſionary opinions concerning what the world might have been in a ſpotleſs ſtate, and to have contentedly taken it as it is.

We muſt ſuppoſe the paſſions implanted in our nature to be all, without exception, enemies to virtue, as a neceſſary conſequence to the above propoſition: but when the involuntary tear ſteals down at the ſcene of miſery and diſtreſs; when indignation riſes at diſingenuous ſentiments; when the bluſhes of modeſty give the ſevereſt reproof to ribaldry and profaneneſs; ſhall we ſtigmatiſe thoſe emotions? Emotions, familiarly to be obſerved, in ſpight of all that imagination can collect from the wantonneſs of the unthinking few.

The ſavageneſs of a RICHARD, or a MACBETH, is a diſſuaſive from tyranny and boundleſs ambition; the unforgivingneſs of a ZANGA is an antidote to revenge; and even

the gaiety of LOTHARIO, however it may at firſt dazzle the Fancy, will always diſguſt Reflection. The heart muſt have received ſtrong impreſſions of guilt, or it will not be tainted by ſcenic repreſentations; and when Vice has once gained the aſcendant there, the man will be hardly affected either by the doctrines of the Pulpit, or the examples of the Stage.

Archbiſhop TILLOTSON's cenſure is levelled at the Abuſe of the Drama: it is directed againſt that inundation of indecency and profaneneſs which overflowed our theatres in the days of CHARLES II.—But how few of thoſe productions are at this period exhibited to the public eye! and how cautiouſly are thoſe few caſtrated, to obviate any bad effects!—If the writer would force them from the cloſet after their long baniſhment from the world, he is even more culpable than the wretches who penned them.

That Plays were unknown to the ancient Jews and primitive Chriſtians, is no argument to the prejudice of thoſe amuſements. Different ſeaſons and ſituations give a ſanction to different purſuits. The Jewiſh religion, which was exactly ſuited to them, was by no means adapted to the politer arts; neither did the genius of its profeſſors permit an indulgence of lighter avocations.—But was the world then more unexceptionably modelled? Did the influence of Piety and

Humanity

Humanity give a greater check to turbulent and unſocial diſpoſitions? Hiſtory ſtands up to confute the aſſertion.

The great work of eſtabliſhing a new religion, the perſecution of its profeſſors, and the vaſt confuſions and agitations which attended its firſt progreſs, will ſufficiently account for the primitive Chriſtians being unacquainted with theſe relaxations; relaxations, indulged with popular regard in more ſettled and peaceable times.

From which, and not from the declining credit of the church, are we to derive the introduction of Theatrical Amuſements among Chriſtians; to which, characters firm in their religious principles, and of the moſt unſhaken integrity, are well known to devote a reaſonable portion of their hours; conſidering it as an innocent, if not a profitable recreation, and that, if the mind receives no improvement, it eſcapes the ill effects ariſing from its being unemployed.

But the Pamphleteer in vain attempts to degrade a theatre only becauſe it is one, while he leaves unnoticed the ſcenes of intrigue, immorality, and irreligion, abounding in other productions; in vain he damns the laſciviouſneſs of a DRYDEN, an OTWAY, or a ROWE; yet boldly patroniſes that ſacrificer of Virtue on the ſhrine of Genius, the author of the *Nouvelle Eloiſe*.

Let

Let this ſkirmiſh in the cauſe of Reaſon meet with your indulgence, and plead my apology.

Quòd longo ſermone morer tua tempora ——

I am,

Reverend Sir,

Your moſt obedient,

Humble Servant.

A LET-

A

LETTER

To the AUTHOR of

The Stage the High Road to Hell.

SIR,

THE Anathema contained in your title-page could not fail either to excite the curioſity, or raiſe the apprehenſions, of every one who frequents thoſe entertainments which are the objects of it; and would conſequently occaſion an enquiry how far the truth of your aſſertions extended, and what foundation they had in ſound ſenſe and unprejudiced reaſon: for while Religion operates at all on the heart of man, every thinking perſon muſt be ſolicitous to know how far he complies with her dictates, and to what degree he may enter into the innocent enjoyments of this world, without endangering his eternal happineſs in another. But, as the criterion by which we are to form our judgement on ſuch matters, depends not on the bare aſſertion of any individual (as the very beſt of us are ſometimes miſguided either by

an

an intemperate zeal, the prejudice of education, or an over-fondneſs of our own opinions) the only method of examining this queſtion properly, is to conſider whether the aſſertion itſelf is true, and on what foundation the proofs of it depend. Moſt who have hitherto attempted to diſcuſs this queſtion, like true caſuiſts, have either depreciated without mercy, or exalted beyond reaſon, the uſe of the ſtage: one ſide extols it as the fountain of reformation and the School of Virtue, while the other cenſures it as the ſource of iniquity and the Court of the Devil. To every diſpaſſionate enquirer the truth will be found to lie between the two extremes, in this caſe (as in moſt others), "and that, though the licentiouſneſs of ſome "of our plays may ſhew the expediency "of reforming them,* yet that it is no "difficult matter to demonſtrate, in op-"poſition to every thing you have advanced, "that plays may be rendered not only an in-"nocent and polite diverſion, but greatly "ſubſervient to the intereſts of morality and "virtue." † Allowing all the rational arguments, that have ever been uſed againſt ſtage-plays, their full force; the concluſion will amount to no more than this, that in

* This I have entered into more fully in ſpeaking of our Engliſh Comedies.

† Theſe are the words of the Monthly Review in their critique on this Eſſay.

in their abuſe they are prejudicial to the cauſe of virtue; and I believe no advocate for them will deny it. By conſent of both parties therefore the propoſition will ſtand thus; That it is not plays themſelves, but the abuſe of them, which is prejudicial to the cauſe of virtue. How far you have proved the Engliſh Stage to be over-run with this abuſe, we ſhall preſently conſider, having firſt pointed out a few miſtakes you have been betrayed into in the very preliminary of your work.

BRITISH MUSEUM

Theatrical Entertainments

CONSISTENT WITH

SOCIETY, &c.

IN the beginning of your Eſſay you are guilty of a notorious contradiction, which takes off the whole force of the principal argument you make uſe of againſt the ſtage. In order to anſwer the aſſertions of the partiſans of Theatrical Repreſentations (who tell us that they are intended to reform the manners of mankind, and, by expoſing vice and folly in feigned characters, make thoſe, who know themſelves guilty, endeavor to correct thoſe qualities which are ſhewn to have a tendency to render them odious and contemptible) you reply, That it may well be diſputed whether exhibiting vice to public view is a method well calculated to make men take a diſtaſte to it; and

in about a dozen lines afterwards, having given us Plato's deſcription of virtue, whoſe native beauty captivates all hearts, you add, "It may with equal truth be ſaid of vice, "that, were it to appear in its own hideous "form, thoſe who are now its moſt abject "ſlaves would ſtart from it with horror."— Had you confined yourſelf to your other aſſertion, viz. That dramatic authors had increaſed the temptation to vice by ſhewing it in an amiable light, (though even then it muſt have been admitted with ſome qualification) you would have eſcaped falling into a blunder which is obvious to the moſt ſuperficial obſervation: * for "exhibiting vice to "public view," and "making vice appear in "its own hideous form," are ſynonymous; and if the latter would make its moſt abject ſlaves ſtart from it with horror, how can it be properly diſputed whether the former is a method well calculated to make men take a diſtaſte to it?

Though it is true that in ſome inſtances vice has been introduced on the ſtage with all the allurements a wanton imagination could ſuggeſt; though in the debauched age of Charles II. and in ſome later reigns, the dramatic writers defiled their wit with obſcenity

* If, by "exhibiting vice to public view," in the foregoing paſſage, he means exhibiting it in pleaſing colours; then his words and his meaning are at variance; for under that appearance vice is not exhibited, but diſguiſed.

ſcenity, and proſtituted their pens to gratify the bad taſte which then prevailed; though this may affect the laſciviouſneſs of a WYCHERLY, a CONGREVE, a BEHN, or a FARQUHAR, why muſt it be extended to the undefiled pens of an ADDISON, a COLMAN, or a STEELE? Is it not notorious to every frequenter of the theatres, that thoſe impure exhibitions extort the indignation rather than the applauſe of all that part of the audience whoſe judgement is of any account? And is it not equally certain, that, under the conduct of the preſent Managers, the moſt exceptionable pieces have been either condemned to that oblivion they deſerve, or have received ſuch alterations as decency and modeſty require? And ſhall the preſent age be called to account for the falſe taſte of their predeceſſors? Such a concluſion would be equally unjuſt and abſurd.

But is vice always thus exhibited in falſe colours upon the ſtage? In the tragedy of Macbeth, if ever it appeared "in its own "hideous form," ſurely it does ſo there. Have you forgot George Barnwell? Without diſparagement to the pulpit it may be ſaid, that a more effectual preſervative againſt vice was never delivered even from thence. How ſtrongly the connexion between the ſeveral degrees of ſin is there painted! How terribly, yet how naturally, are the conſequences of it there deſcribed! The tragedy of

Richard

Richard the Third would furniſh me with ſimilar obſervations; and, was I diſpoſed to declame, I could find a ſubject in moſt of the tragedies of Shakeſpeare.

You ſay "the profeſſion of an actor has "been eſteemed infamous in all ages." What reſtraints on that profeſſion, in common with moſt other employments that were not martial, the Roman laws impoſed, agreeable to the genius of that warlike people, is little to the purpoſe; for, had the profeſſion been infamous (in our acceptation of the word) Cicero would hardly have made ſuch honorable mention of one of its profeſſors; who, ſpeaking of Roſcius in his oration for Archias, ſays, *Qui cum eſſet ſenex mortuus, tamen propter excellentem artem et venuſtatem, videbatur omnino mori non debuiſſe.* In the times of the Emperors we find this law relative to them, "*Si libertus artem pantomimi exerceat, verum eſt debere eum non ſolum ipſi patrono, ſed etiam amicorum ludis gratiatam operam præſtare:* upon which Roſinus obſerves, *Non omnes pantomimi ſervilis conditionis, quum etiam libertis eam artem exercere permittant leges: et certe maximus iis honor deferebatur,* Roſin. Rom. Ant. l. v. c. 6,—2. And even in the virtuous times of the republic we find an exception in their favor—*Inſtitutum manet ut actores attellanarum nec tribu moveantur, et ſtipendia tanquam expertes*

*expertes artis ludicræ faciant**. But what will the gentle reader think, when he is informed that in Greece likewiſe the profeſſion was held infamous; and that on no ſmaller authority, than on the word of Demoſthenes?—Your words are, "However, that the profeſſion of "a player was conſidered as ſcandalous, ap- "pears evidently from a paſſage in the cele- "brated oration of Demoſthenes concerning "the crown: that renowned orator, in draw- "ing a parallel between himſelf and Eſchines "his rival, in order to ſhew how much he had "the advantage of him, tells him; You, ſays "he, were a player, I was an auditor; you "acted your part ill, I hiſſed you." 'Twas kindly done, after ſo much dry reaſoning, to bid your readers unbend a little, and be merry at this jocular inference; for who, without joking, could ſuppoſe that Demoſthenes hiſſed at him becauſe his profeſſion was ſcandalous, when he expreſsly tells us it was becauſe he acted his part ill? †

Againſt this inference we ſhall oppoſe two authorities only, out of the infinite number which might be produced on this occaſion—The firſt is that of Corn. Nepos, *In ſcenam vere prodire, & populo eſſe ſpectaculo, nemini in eiſdem gentibus (Græcis) fuiſſe turpitudine, &c.* The other is towards the end of the 6th book of

* Liv. l. vii. c. 2. Val. Max. l. ii. c. 4. § 4.

† Note, the ſame reaſon for hiſſing ſubſiſts to this day, as is known at both our theatres by woeful experience.

of Juſtin—*In dies feſtos apparatuſque ludorum, reditus publicos effundunt, & cum actoribus nobiliſſimis poetiſque theatra celebrant frequentius ſcenam quam caſtra viſentes, &c.* But how could that profeſſion be eſteemed ſcandalous among people who made the application of theatrical money, even to the ſervice of the public, a capital crime; who have ranked a ſkill in muſic and dancing among the accompliſhments of their greateſt men?

* You have inſerted a whimſical tale of a whimſical law-giver of Greece, in which dramatic fiction is very ſeverely treated. Æſchylus, it ſeems, had acted with general applauſe in a play of his own compoſing.—Tho' his characters and productions were unexceptionable, the legiſlator aſked him in a rage (which was not ſo decent in a legiſlator, you muſt allow) what he meant by telling ſo many lies? Here, by the by, you place in the light of deceit, what you had before cenſured as too faithful a picture of real life. The poet, to this fooliſh impertinent queſtion returning this ſenſible anſwer, That the audience were not deceived, as they knew it to be a fiction; the legiſlator replied, By uſing ourſelves to tell lies for our amuſement, we may at laſt come to tell them in earneſt.

Our

* *Vide Plut. in Pelopida*; *Corn. Nep. in Epaminonda, et Diog. Laertium in Pythagora.*

Our modern players exhibit for bread; and when one of them is ſitting comfortably down over the meal he has earned, what a philoſophical caution would it be to him, to abſtain from eating, leſt in time he ſhould be a glutton! *

We come now to a repetition of the ſame objection you made in your Dedication, and which we have already anſwered; but, as you ſeem to lay great ſtreſs upon it, we ſhall add ſome farther remarks.

You introduce it here, by telling us, that BOSSUET was of opinion, that only one tragedy in the French language may even be read without danger||; for that all the reſt are wrote in ſuch a manner as to excite the paſſions. This charge is ſo general, that it will admit of no particular reply: the paſſions may be influenced ſo many different ways, and for ſuch different ends; that 'till thoſe ends are aſcertained it is impoſſible to pronounce whether the conſequences are good or bad. —— Virtue is never ſo highly exalted, as when the affections of the heart are engaged on her ſide: without them, ſhe produces only a lifeleſs apathy; with them, the moſt exalted impreſſions of which our nature is ſuſceptible. —— This ſentence, therefore, is ſo indiſtinctly pointed, that the preciſe meaning

* The ſame ſort of reaſon gave Rollin for never acting while he was a ſcholar at the Jeſuits college, and equally ridiculous.

|| Eſſay, p. 6.

cannot be diſcovered; but in the next, where you apply the objection to the tragedies of our own country, you explain yourſelf farther, by telling us that the reading or ſeeing them is highly dangerous, as paſſion is carried in them to the greateſt lengths. * Now that ſuch a repreſentation of the paſſions is attended with any dangerous conſequences, I muſt deny on your own principles; ſince it is one of the principal ends every tragic writer ought to have in view, in order, as you ſaid before, "to make ſuch vicious exceſs appear in its own hideous form, and by deſcribing the fatal conſequences which naturally enſue, to deter its moſt abject ſlaves from falling into the ſame error." †

The examples of ſuicide, which are ſo frequently exhibited upon the Engliſh ſtage, as well as all that horrid carnage with which it abounds more than any other, I wiſh indeed, for its reputation, were to be for ever baniſhed from it.

—Non tamen intus
Digna geri, promes in Scenam ——
Quodcunque oſtendis mihi ſic, incredulus odi. ‖

How often is the attention of the audience interrupted by the removal of the ſlain! How often, even in the cataſtrophe itſelf, where the poet exerts his utmoſt ſtretch of ability to rouſe every feeling of the audience, does the inconſiſtency of theſe repreſentations recall us to ourſelves, convince us of the trick, and

* Eſſay, p. 6. † Ibid. p. 3. ‖ Ars Poet. l. 182, &c.

and deſtroy every end of the writer!—In ſhort, whenever I ſee embattled ſquadrons on the ſtage, heroes in the agonies of death, or any of thoſe *ſpecioſa miracula*, which disfigure our ſtage; I cannot help ſaying to myſelf, *Incredulus odi*. But, however the laws of the Drama may be offended, morality can be no ways affected by it.

*As to ſuppoſing that the example of Cato, in particular, can have any influence, it ſeems to be highly improbable; for it would be neceſſary, in that caſe, to prove a conformity of manners, principles and circumſtances; and I much queſtion if there is a perſon living whoſe character and ſituation at all correſponds with that of this celebrated Roman Patriot †: and, if ſuch a perſon is to be found, he muſt conſider the behaviour of Cato (though conſiſtent with the principles he profeſſed, which were the moſt pure the darkneſs of his age afforded) as irreconcileable to the clearer light every Chriſtian en-

 joys;

* Eſſay, p. 6.

† How different is the character of Cato from the herd of ſuicides — wretches, whoſe daſtard ſpirits are unequal to the *common calamities* of life! VIRGIL has ſhewn us how infinitely they differ in his judgement: ſpeaking of the latter, he ſays,

Proxima deinde tenent mœſti loca, qui ſibi letum
Inſontes peperêre manu, lucemque peroſi
Projecêre animas—Quam vellent æthere in alto,
Nunc et pauperiem et duros perferre labores.
Æn. vi. 434, &c.

But of Cato,

Secretoſque pios his dantem jura Catonem. Æn. viii. 670.

joys; which indeed proves that their ſituation can never be directly alike, and therefore that there is no danger in the example.

As to the vehement ſentence you paſs on Hamlet, it muſt appear unjuſt, even to yourſelf, on a re-examination.—It is a memorable and uſeful leſſon, to teach us, that, however the wicked may ſeem to proſper in their ſchemes, and however ſecure they may eſteem themſelves in the commiſſion of their crimes, yet that the divine vengeance will overtake them at a time, and in a manner, they no ways expect: it teaches us, that the judgement of heaven can reach even thoſe who are placed above the controul of human laws; and the appearance of the Spirit, by an apt alluſion, ſhews us by what uncommon and unforeſeen methods the ſecret crimes of the wicked are often detected.

Whether SOPHOCLES propoſed his Oreſtes as a pattern of imitation or not, conſult ÆSCHYLUS and EURIPIDES, who have deſcribed the dreadful conſequences of his parricide in the torments he underwent on that account; to which VIRGIL alludes, Æn. iv, 471, &c.

Aut Agamemnonius ſcenis agitatus Oreſtes,
Armatam facibus matrem, et ſerpentibus atris
Cum fugit, ultriceſque ſedent in limine Diræ.

In Venice Preſerved, you tell us that the horrid and barbarous deſign of ſetting fire to a city, and maſſacring all the inhabitants, is repre-

repreſented as glorious and heroic.—It is ſo; but by whom? Why, as it is natural to ſuppoſe, by the conſpirators themſelves, and is the language of conſpiracy from that of Brutus to the Popiſh plot.—But does the conſequence recommend the conſpiracy? No.

Ridicule on any body of men, who do not affect ſome abſurd diſtinction, has ever incurred the juſt cenſure and animadverſion of men of ſenſe: and when ſuch ridicule has been levelled at the very reſpectable body of the clergy, it has always returned back with double force upon the author.—But when a writer ſatyriſes any uſage which is repugnant both to the civil and religious inſtitutions of his own country, ſurely he falls not within the ſcope of your indignation. In the paſſage before us *, we find the ſcene of action laid in a country whoſe religion enjoins celibacy to prieſts; and the very argument is here inſinuated, which has often been ſeriouſly urged againſt that inſtitution.—But can it at all affect an order of men, who in this, as in many other reſpects, are ſo totally different from that alluded to, and with whom the perſon who ſpeaks it muſt be ſuppoſed wholly unacquainted?

In the Fair Penitent you have taxed that ſcene where Lothario relates to his friend the manner

* P. 8. "Would you think it? Renault, that old withered, winter rogue, loves ſimple fornication like a Prieſt."

manner in which he triumphed over the virtue of Caliſta, with the moſt flagrant obſcenity: yet the animated warmth of that deſcription has induced you to give a new edition of it to the world, and to dedicate to it almoſt a page of your moral performance*.—You ſhould, however, at the ſame time have informed your readers, that it comes from the mouth of a profeſſed libertine, who, with the unhappy object of his luſt, at laſt receives a puniſhment adequate to his crimes; and that the fatal conſequences which attend the violation of the marriage-bed were the inference drawn by the poet from their example.

The reflection made by Jane Shore on the peculiar ſeverity with which her ſex is treated upon the ſmalleſt deviation from virtue, is certainly far from being improper‖.—Let any one reflect on the vaſt diſproportion between the cenſure which paſſes on the one ſex, and on the other, for the ſame offence; and then pronounce whether the diſtinction is reaſonable or not.

Having now gone through your examination of the Tragic Writers, I hope it will appear, that the faults you have imputed to them have ariſen from your own miſapprehenſion, miſapplication, and miſinterpretation; and ſhall from thence conclude, "that "it does not evidently appear that dramatic "poets

* Eſſay, p. 9. ‖ Ibid. p. 10.

" poets take every opportunity to apologiſe " for vice."†

In ſpeaking of Comedy, you ſet off with this general poſition, " that it is intended only to " amuſe, not to edify."§— Now this I muſt deny, as there have been many of our comic writers, who have endeavoured to laugh us out of our follies, and have ſerved at once to amuſe and inſtruct: for there are a variety of abſurdities in common life, too trivial for the notice of the pulpit, and too ridiculous to be the object of ſerious argument, that are no ways ſo effectually corrected as by the Comic Muſe. —— It is then ſhe ſhines in her proper ſphere, and is productive of greater conſequences than ſhe pretends to, or which on a ſuperficial obſervation do appear. Nevertheleſs, I wiſh ſome of them had not given but too juſt an occaſion for the charge you produce againſt them, and that the contagion of immorality, which in ſome reigns ſo deeply infected the manners of the people, had not extended a more laſting infection to the productions of Genius and Wit. ‡ However, that the moſt exceptionable of thoſe pieces are, in their preſent repreſentation, ſtripped of the indecency which

† Eſſay, p. 11. § Ibid.

‡ The abuſes of the ſtage are now in great meaſure removed; and, from the diſpoſition and example of the preſent Directors of it, we have good reaſon to expect that the reformation will be completed.

which formerly disfigured them, I ſhall prove by two or three inſtances which you yourſelf have pointed out. The firſt is that horrid expreſſion * (in the Relapſe of Sir J. VANBRUGH) which you tell us you could not quote without trembling, and which I ſhall wave quoting at all. —— I have two late editions of that play, and find it omitted in both; and it hath conſtantly been omitted in all the repreſentations of the play, I have yet ſeen: and therefore, as the decency of the preſent times had anticipated your cenſure, I think it would have been but decent and fair in you to have paſſed it over in ſilence, as the remark came too late to be of any other uſe than to revive its remembrance; which is a fault next to that of the author, and which I hope you would not wilfully have committed.

Your cenſure on the Provoked Wife † may be anſwered in the ſame manner; as the habit of a Clergyman has been exchanged for a Woman's ever ſince I can remember it on the ſtage; whereby not only the decency of the piece has been preſerved, but even its humour conſiderably increaſed.

It is not my intention to vindicate every paſſage, in our comic writers, you have objected againſt: I ſhall only obſerve, that very few of them are at preſent in any degree

* Eſſay, p. 12. † Eſſay, p. 13.

gree of repute, and that therefore those objections are obviated to one who writes professedly on the influence of stage-plays, or the manners of the present times.*—I confess indeed, that the Suspicious Husband † has always incurred the censure you pass upon it; and that you very properly stigmatize that sort of honor, which is not only independent of, but frequently in the highest degree repugnant to, the dictates of religion.

I must confess (and sorry am I that truth compels me to confess it) that one of the greatest geniusses this kingdom ever produced, has given sufficient occasion for the severe reflexion of Burnet; ‡ but every one knows and laments, that he sacrificed every part of his reputation as a Man, and in many instances too as a Writer, (to the eternal infamy of the age he lived in be it spoken!) to his want of bread.

As one of the principal objections you made to our tragic writers arose from their treatment of the Sacred Order, so you repeat the same charge with more vigour against the Comic Muse §: but I believe, when clearly understood, it will appear void of foundation as to both; for, if by the Clergy you mean that body of men in this country, who

 are

* Essay, p. 17.

† This comedy wants only Ranger's reformation, to be one of the foremost on the English stage.

‡ Essay, p. 12. § Essay, p. 13, 14, and 15.

are ſet apart for the ſervice of religion as eſtabliſhed by law, I may ſafely join iſſue with you, and defy you to produce an example of ſuch contempt: but if, on the contrary, you dignify a few deluding or deluded perſons § with that name (which the tenor of your

§ That the Fanatics in their very infancy were taxed with hypocriſy, madneſs, and inveteracy to the church, I ſhall prove by a witneſs they little expect ſhould appear againſt them (being a Non-conformiſt), the good old martyrologiſt Foxe. — This quotation is from a letter of his, relative to the expulſion of his ſon from Magdalen College in Oxford, by a party of theſe religioniſts, and ſhews plainly what his opinion of them was: I hope the reader will, from a conſideration of the weight of ſuch an authority, and its never having been before applied directly to this ſubject (to the beſt of my knowlege), pardon the length of this quotation. There is a remarkable prediction of the troubles afterwards occaſioned by the Fanatics, which deſerves particular notice. — The letter was written in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and is as follows.

Fuller's Church Hiſtory, Book iii. Sect. 3, p. 106. *Illud confiteor ſemper caviſſe me ſedulo, ut ſi minus prodeſſe multis licuerit, ne ſciens tamen obeſſem cuiquam, tum vero minime omnium Magdalenſibus; quo magis id mihi admirationi habetur, quis tam turbulentus genius* factioſa iſta Puritanorum capita *afflaverit, ut ſic violatis gratiarum legibus, ſpretis meis ad ſe literis et precibus, contempta ipſius Præſidis interceſſione, nullâ præmiſsâ admonitione, nec cauſa* redditâ *tantam hanc in me filiumque tyrannidem exercuerint. Quod ſi enim eſſem, qui* perbacchari *cum eis contra Epiſcopos, et Archi-Epiſcopos, aut ſcribam me præbere illorum ordini, hoc eſt,* inſanire cum illis *voluiſſem, nunquam iſtos in me aculeos exacuiſſent. Nunc quia* totus ab iis alienus, *partes illas ſectari maluerim, quæ modeſtiæ ſunt, et publicæ tranquillitatis, hinc odium in me conceptum jam diu, in hanc demum efferbuit acerbitatem. Quod cum ita ſit, non*

jam

your eſſay proves to be the caſe;) if you confound the clergy and their moſt inveterate enemies together; if ridicule on thoſe contortions of body, and extravagancies of imagination, which impoſe upon the ignorant, and offend the ſerious believer, you call "an attempt "to render the clergy contemptible;" then I confeſs we differ eſſentially in our notions, and they muſt be ſeverally ſubmitted to the determination of the public. But, whatever prejudice you have in favour of the Fanatics of the laſt age, or the Methodiſts of this; I will aſk you if the former were not at perpetual war with the Clergy, whom, by their agitations of body, and fancied inſpiration, they endeavoured to bring into contempt;

jam quid mea cauſa velitis facere, id poſtulo, quin potius quid veſtra ipſorum cauſa cogitandum ſit, vos, qui proceres eſtis eccleſiæ, etiam atque etiam deliberate. Quod ad me autem attinet, quamvis ereptа filio ſocietas haud leni afficit animum ægritudine, tamen quia res privata agitur, hoc fero moderatius. Magis me commovet publicæ eccleſiæ ratio. Video enim ſuboriri quoddam genus hominum, qui, ſi invaleſcant, viresque in hoc regno colligant, piget hic referre, quid futuræ perturbationis præſagit mihi animus. *Olim ſub monachorum fucatâ Hypocriſi quanta ſit nata lues Religioni Chriſtianæ, minime ignorat prudentia tua.—Nunc* in iſtis neſcio quod novum monachorum genus reviviſcere videtur tanto illis perniciosius, quanto callidiore fallendi artificio ſub prætextu perfectionis perſonati iſti Hiſtriones gravius occultant venenum, *qui dum omnia exigunt ad ſtrictiſſimæ ſuæ diſciplinæ et conſcientiæ gnomones, haud videntur prius deſtituri, donec omnia in Judaicum redigant ſervitutem.*—If this deſcription had been intended for the Methodiſts, it could not have ſuited them better.

if, when they found how inferior they were in argument, they did not ſtrive to ſubdue them by force, and to overturn thoſe pulpits from whence they had ſo often been confuted? I will aſk you, whether BEN JOHNSON, or Dr. SOUTH †, has moſt effectually expoſed them? and if, in a few years after they had overthrown all order both in church and ſtate, there was not a revolution in favor of common ſenſe, and ſcarce a trace of them

† SOUTH's Sermons, vol. ii. p. 159. edit. 8vo. 1722. Are not all their prayers exactly after the heatheniſh and phariſaical copy? always notable for thoſe two things, length and tautology? Two whole hours for one prayer, at a faſt, uſed to be reckoned but a moderate doſe; and that for the moſt part fraught with ſuch irreverent, blaſphemous expreſſions, that to repeat them would profane the place I am ſpeaking in: and indeed they ſeldom carried on the work of ſuch a day, (as their phraſe was), but they left the church in need of a new conſecration. — Add to this the incoherence and confuſion, the endleſs repetitions, and the inſufferable nonſenſe, that never failed to hold out with their utmoſt prolixity; ſo that in all their long faſts —— the pulpit was always the emptieſt thing in the church: and I never knew ſuch a faſt kept by them, but their hearers had cauſe to begin a thankſgiving as ſoon as they had done. — Their language was ſo like the language of a dream, and their carriage in prayer being with their eyes for the moſt part ſhut, and their arms ſtretched out in a yawning poſture, their hearers might, by a very pardonable error, be induced to think they were talking in their ſleep, beſides the ſtrange virtue which their prayers had to procure ſleep in others too; ſo that he who ſhould be preſent at all their long cant, would ſhew a greater ability in watching, than ever they could pretend to in praying, if he could forbear ſleeping, having ſo ſtrong a provocation to it, and ſo fair an excuſe for it.

them or their doctrines left? If there is a character on earth which commands reſpect, it is that of a Clergyman who inculcates the principles of virtue and piety by his precepts and example; and if there exiſts the man who underſtands ſo little the welfare of ſociety, as to regard it without reſpect, he can ſcarce be fool enough to confeſs it. But, to take off the maſk of Hypocriſy is a real ſervice to the cauſe of Religion; and Ridicule may ſafely exert her powers when fighting under the banners of Truth. A late excellent prelate has given his ſanction to the practice *, and convinced us that Reaſoning and Ridicule are admirable auxiliaries to one another: For theſe reaſons therefore I cannot agree to your concluſion, "That dramatic writers are the ſworn enemies of "the church, or that the clergy are conſidered by them as foes, againſt whom "their united forces ſhould be levelled." †

I proceed now to prove, (as I promiſed in the title-page) "That your authorities from "the ancients are miſconſtrued and pervert-"ed:" and, had you not ſo ſcandalouſly diſregarded truth, and endeavoured to impoſe upon the public by thoſe authorities you produce to ſupport your hypotheſis, you never would have been troubled with this reply.

And

* Late Biſhop of Exeter. † P. 15.

B^p Lowth

And I cannot enter upon this taſk, without previouſly taking notice of the manner in which you make your quotations. In order to affix to a paſſage what ſenſe you pleaſe, you give it in Engliſh with no marginal reference whatever, preſuming that few would take the trouble to examine if the quotation was fairly made, or whether the tranſlation was a juſt one, or not. And herein indeed you have ſucceeded admirably; for as we may fairly ſay of the likeneſs of your tranſlation to the originals, *nil fuit unquam tam diſpar ſibi*, ſo, when after much labor the original is found out, we really are uncertain whether it is the original or not.

Paſſing by the prodigious learning you diſcover in your account of the Roman games and plays †, I ſhall begin with the firſt author you introduce, Valerius Maximus; and we will firſt ſee what you ſay for him, and then what he ſays for himſelf.

* "We are informed by Valerius Maximus, "that one Valeſius, a rich Roman, being "ill of the plague, was by the direction "of an evil ſpirit cured of it, by waſhing "in

† The author ſees no difference between the Games and Plays of the Romans; for he ſays, "Theſe plays "(namely the Circenſian, Floral, Cereal, Apollinar, "and Capitoline) made a vital part of their religion; "an Actor was a kind of Prieſt; the Theatre, a Tem-"ple." — MONTFAUCON was but a child compared to our Antiquarian.

* Eſſay, p. 19.

" in hot water taken from the altar of Pro-
" ſerpina; in acknowledgment of which the
" ſpirit ordered his patient to inſtitute cer-
" tain plays to him." —— Now for your authority: † *Cum ingenti peſtilentiâ urbs agrique vaſtarentur, Valeſius vir locuples ruſticæ vitæ duobus filiis & filiâ ad deſperationem uſque medicorum laborantibus, aquam calidam iis a foco petens, genibus nixus, Lares familiares, ut puerorum periculum in ipſius caput transferrent, oravit: Orta deinde vox eſt, habiturum eos ſalvos, ſi continuo flumine Tiberis devectos Terentum deportâſſet; ibique ex Ditis patris et Proſerpinæ arâ, petita caldâ recreâſſet.* —— *Quâ pota ſalutari quiete ſopiti, diutina vi morbi repente ſunt liberati; patrique indicaverunt vidiſſe ſe in ſomniis quos neſcio deorum, ſpongia corpora ſua pertergere, et præcipere, ut ad Ditis patris et Proſerpinæ aram, a quâ fuerat potio ipſis allata, furvæ hoſtiæ immolarentur, lectiſternia ludique nocturni fierent.* —— So it appears that in ſeven lines you have made four

† Val. Max. l. ii. c. 4. § 5. This paſſage no more relates to ſtage-plays, than it does to the tabernacle in Moorfields, as is plain from the words of the author which preface the ſtory: *Et quia cæteri ludi ipſis appellationibus, unde trahantur apparet, non abſurdum videtur* ſæcularibus *initium ſuum, cujus generis minus certa notitia eſt reddere.*

Theſe games, according to ſome hiſtorians, were firſt inſtituted under Numa, 336 years before ſtage-plays were known to the Romans; though others place their inſtitution under Valerius Publicola, and others even later.

four miſtakes, or rather one continued blunder: for it was not Valeſius, but two ſons and a daughter of his, who were ill of the plague; it was not an evil ſpirit, but their houſhold gods (as the ſtory goes) who ſuggeſted the remedy; they did not waſh in hot water taken from Proſerpine's altar, but drank ſome made warm on the altar of Pluto and Proſerpine; and the plays inſtituted on this occaſion are neither more nor leſs than the ſecular Games.

The next inſtance of your erudition is more curious far than the preceding. Your words are, * "And Dionyſius Halicarnaſſeus "ſays, that in a time of great mortality "the Devil appeared to one T. Latinus in "the ſhape of Jupiter Capitolinus, com-"manding him to tell the citizens, that "this judgement was owing to their neglect "of the Plays; whereupon they were re-"newed with greater pomp, and the plague "ceaſed."—*Latine, dic civibus mihi ludi Præſultatorem diſplicuiſſe, qui niſi magnifice inſtaurentur, periculum urbi fore.*——Before we confront you with your authority, the reader will recollect that this ſtory is told by Dionyſius Halicarnaſſenſis and Plutarch of one Titus Latinus, and by Livy, with ſome ſmall variation, of Tib. Atinius †. Now you

* Eſſay, p. 19.

† Theſe names have ſo near an affinity to each other, that it is probable all the difference aroſe from the miſtake of the tranſcribers.

you have jumbled Dionyſius and Livy together, and made a ſtory of your own.

Dion. Halicar. Antiq. Rom. l. vii. c. 68. Ἔπειτα ἦκέ τις ἐπὶ τὸ συνέδριον τῆς βυλῆς, ἄῤῥως ἐπὶ κλινιδίυ κομιζόμενος Τῖτος Λατῖνος ὄνομα, πρεσβύτερός τε ἀνὴρ καὶ οὐσίας ἱκανῆς Κύριος αὐτουργὸς δὲ καὶ τὸν πλείω χρόνον τοῦ βίυ, ζῶν ἐν ἀγρῷ. Οὗτος, εἰς τὴν βυλὴν ἐνεχθεὶς ἔφη δόξαι καθ' ὕπνον ἐπιστάνλα τὸν Καπιτώλιον Δία λέγειν αὐτῳ Ἰθι Λατῖνε καὶ λέγε τοῖς πολίταις ὅτε μοὶ τῇ νεωςὶ πομπῇ τὸι ἡγεμενον ὀρχηστὴν ε καλὸν ἔδωκαν· ἵνα ἀνάθωνται τὰς ἑορτὰς καὶ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἑτέρας ἐπιτελεσωσίν. ε γὰρ δέδεγμαι τάυτας. Which is thus rendered in the Latin tranſlation: *I Latine, dic tuis civibus, eos mihi nuper in ludis non egregium Præſultatorem dediſſe, & jube eos iterum dies feſtos et ludos inſtaurare: neque enim hi fuerunt mihi grati.* This, though not quite literal, conveys the meaning of the original; but where did you find *qui niſi magnifice inſtaurentur periculum urbi fore?* Let us now ſee how the ſtory is told by Livy,* and the difficulty will vaniſh. *Haud ita multo poſt Tib. Atinio de plebe homini ſomnium fuit —— Viſus Jupiter dicere, ſibi ludis Præſultatorem diſplicuiſſe, niſi magnifice inſtaurarentur hi ludi, periculum urbi fore; iret, ea conſulibus nunciaret.* Here then we ſee what occaſioned your miſtake: but from whence you derive your authority in ſaying that it was the Devil in the ſhape of Jupiter Capitolinus, I con-

 feſs

* Liv. l. ii. c. 36.

feſs myſelf not able to diſcover. If you reply, that all thoſe illuſions proceeded from the influence of the evil ſpirit, you muſt prove alſo that the ancients were of the ſame opinion; or elſe by this very quotation you deſtroy all you have been aiming to prove: for Jupiter Capitolinus was ever eſteemed by them a Deity 'till you metamorphoſed him into a Dæmon; and the very thing you mean by their judgement to condemn, is a ſerious and eſſential ſervice in their religion, if we are to give credit to DIONYSIUS and LIVY for their own opinion. But this inſtance of your erudition might have been ſpared as well as the former, ſince Scenic Diverſions were not known at Rome till one hundred and twenty ſix years after this tranſaction happened.

The next quotation I ſhall take notice of is from LIVY, and indeed relates to the ſubject before us; but what reſemblance there is of the original in your tranſlation does not very plainly appear.

* "LIVY the hiſtorian ſays, That Plays "were brought in upon the ſcore of Reli- "gion; but that the remedy proved worſe "than the diſeaſe, for the plays did more "hurt to the mind than the peſtilence to "the body." ‖

But,

* Eſſay, p. 27.

‖ You thought you had ſufficiently guarded every avenue to detection, and might impoſe any words of your own

But, if you will believe me, LIVY never ſaid any ſuch thing: his words are, *Nec tamen ludorum primum initium procurandis religionibus datum, aut religione animos, aut corpora morbis levavit*, l. vii. c. 3.—'they 'neither freed their minds from ſuperſtition, 'nor their bodies from the plague.'

As I believe the reader is already pretty well ſurfeited with the foregoing ſpecimens of your learning and candor, I ſhall conclude with three more, from SENECA, PROPERTIUS, and the younger PLINY.

You tell us, † "That SENECA complains "that the Roman youth were generally cor- "rupted by the encouragement which that "vicious prince gave to the ſtage.—In ſtage- "plays, ſays that excellent philoſopher, vice "finds an eaſy paſſage to the heart; and "the play-houſe is the high road to the bro- "thel-houſe.—He therefore adviſes LUCI- "LIUS to avoid all plays, and laments the "frequent concourſe of the Roman youth "to them."——Now let us have this complaint of the philoſopher in his own words: *Inimica eſt multorum converſatio; nemo non aliquod nobis vitium aut commendat, aut im-*

 primit,

own on LIVY, by thus quoting at large one of the moſt voluminous writers whoſe works have come down to us: but, unfortunately, you pitched on the very chapter wherein that hiſtorian gives an account of the riſe and progreſs of the Drama, lib. vii. cap. 2. & 3.—See alſo VAL. MAXIMUS, lib. ii. c. 4. §. 4.

† Eſſay, p. 27.

*primit, aut neſcientibus allinit.—Utique quo major eſt populus cui commiſcemur, hoc periculi plus eſt. Nihil vero eſt tam damnoſum bonis moribus, quam in aliquo ſpectaculo deſidere.—Tunc enim per voluptatem vitia facilius ſurrepunt.—Quid me exiſtimas dicere? Avarior redeo, ambitioſior, luxurioſior, imo vero crudelior & inhumanior quia inter homines fui.—Caſu in meridianum ſpectaculum incidi, luſus expectans & ſales, & aliquid luxamenti, quo hominum oculi ab humano cruore acquieſcant.—Contra eſt, quicquid ante pugnatum eſt miſericordia fuit; nunc, omiſſis nugis, mera homicidia ſunt.**—In the former part of this paſſage SENECA recommends retirement, by ſhewing the inconveniencies that ariſe to a philoſopher from a public life—*inimica multorum converſatio.*---He cenſures upon this principle all Public Aſſemblies, and concludes with reflecting on the barbarity of Gladiatorial Exhibitions; but as to Stage-Plays, "this excellent philoſopher" has not ſaid a ſyllable on the ſubject.

Well, but with one falſe print (which ſhall charitably be imputed to the printer) we have for once an author quoted in his own language; ‡ and, if the context would but allow of the application, we muſt have permitted

O nimis exitio nata theatra meo!

to have paſſed as a bitter reflection of PROPERTIUS on the ſtage: but when we find the

* SEN. Op. fol. Par. edit. p. 168.

‡ Eſſay, p. 28.

the ſame conſequences attributed to Walking in the Streets, as to the Playhouſe, your application of this line will appear to be very different from what the context will allow.—PROP. l. ii. El. 22.

Scis, here, mî multas pariter placuiſſe puellas;
Scis mihi, Demophoön, multa venire mala:
Nulla meis fruſtra luſtrantur compita plantis.
O! nimis exitio nata theatra meo! §

So

§ Some editions have,
Omnia in exitium nata theatra meum.

We muſt however in juſtice to our author confeſs, that he is not ſingular in his application of this paſſage. The arch-critic SCALIGER himſelf has been corrected for underſtanding it in the ſame ſenſe. *Scaliger ergo fallitur, qui theatrorum factam mentionem a Propertio putat propter fabulas (moribus noxias) quæ agebantur.—Vide Paſſeratium in locum.* The ſame thought occurs again, Lib. iv. El. 8. 77.

Colla cave inflectas ad ſummum obliqua theatrum.

To the ſame purpoſe, OVID. *in Triſt.* l. ii. p. 57.

Ut tamen hoc fatear; Ludi quoque ſemina præbent
Nequitiæ—tolli tota theatra jube—

Theſe two lines by themſelves make ſtrongly for our author, but thoſe which follow preſently afterwards reſtrain them to our conſtruction.

Tollatur Circus, non tuta licentia Circi
Hic ſedet ignoto juncta puella viro, &c.

Thus *Amor.* Lib. ii. El. 7.

Sive ego marmorei reſpexi ſumma theatri,
Eligis e multis unde dolere velis.—

And *de Arte amandi*, lib. i. p. 402.

Scilicet ex illo ſolennia more theatra
Nunc quoque formoſis invidioſa manent.

And Lib. iii. *de Arte amandi*, p. 501. Edit. Delph.

Quid faciat cuſtos cum ſint tot in urbe theatra.

It was the opportunities of gallantry young perſons enjoyed at theſe entertainments, and nothing in the entertainments themſelves, that are here intended by the poet.

So this terrible cenſure proves to be no more than one of thoſe many love-ſick complaints ſo frequent in this claſs of writers.

The laſt of the unfortunate ancients whom you have forcibly dragged in to ſupport an hypotheſis he never dreamed of, is the younger PLINY.

You ſay, "L. Plinius Secundus (which "by the by was not his name, it being "Caius Plinius Cæcilius Secundus) in his "Panegyric upon Trajan ſtyles plays Effe-"minate Arts, and altogether unbecoming "men; and praiſes the emperor for baniſh-"ing them out of the Roman empire, whoſe "honor they had ſullied, and whoſe virtue "they had corrupted." † Whoſe honor and virtue do you mean; Trajan's, or the Roman empire's? If you mean the latter, ‡ you are the firſt of politicians that have attributed their corruption to this cauſe; if you mean the former, you are the firſt that ever ſpoke thus of Trajan.——In this paſſage PLINY means only to compliment the emperor for diſcountenancing that ſervile adulation which had been ſo profuſely beſtowed on himſelf and his predeceſſors by every rank of men, from the conſuls to the actors of the Roman people.—*Et quis jam locus miſeræ adulationis manebat, cum laudes imperatorum ludis etiam & comeſſationibus celebrarentur, ſalta-*

† Eſſay, p. 29.

‡ To "corrupt an empire's virtue" is a very harſh phraſe.

ſaltarenturque, atque in omne ludibrium effœminatis vocibus, modis, geſtibus, frangerentur.—Sed illud indignum, quod eodem tempore in ſenatu & in ſcenâ, ab hiſtrione & a conſule laudabantur. Tu procul a tui cultu ludicras artes removiſti.—Seria ergo te carmina, honorque æternus annalium non hæc brevis & pudenda prædicatio colit; quinetiam tanto majore conſenſu in venerationem tui theatra ipſa conſurgent, quanto magis de te ſcenæ ſilebunt.†—— I ſhall make no farther comment on this quotation, as the interpretation you have given us of it will apply as well to any other paſſage, in any other writer, as it does to this‡.

I am extremely ſorry that you could not content yourſelf with proſtituting the writers of Greece and Rome to your purpoſe, but muſt obtrude two paſſages of Holy Writ§ upon us, no more applicable to the ſubject than the foregoing; for the ſituation of the Children of Iſrael, their ſtubborn propenſity to idolatry, and the many idolaters with whom they mixed, ſufficiently inform us why the very

† Paneg. Vet. p. 62. Edit. Delph.

‡ Surely he fixed his eyes upon *ſcenæ ſilebunt*, and to *procul a tui cultu ludicras artes removiſti*; and concluded at once that it muſt therefore be ſomething againſt ſtage-plays.

§ Eſſay, p. 24.

The firſt is JER. x. 3. "Thus ſaith the Lord: Learn "not the way of the heathen, for the cuſtoms of the "people are vain."

The ſecond, EXOD. xxiii. 13. "Make no mention of "the name of other gods; neither let it be heard out of "thy mouth."

very mention of thoſe falſe gods was forbidden.

With one or two obſervations more this pamphlet, which has already exceeded the bounds I intended, ſhall conclude. You tell us, † "that the Gallican church has ſtigmatiſed plays and players in a very extraordinary manner."—And to deny Chriſtian burial to a body of men on account of their profeſſion is extraordinary indeed.—Do you mean to vindicate this uſage, fit only for a land of ſavages? an uſage, which, while it excites our pity for the unfortunate objects, raiſes our indignation at the authors of it. But remember, that the ſame church, which thus denies Chriſtian burial to players, denies it alſo to the members of the Reformed churches; and, by the help of a few ridiculous ceremonies, purchaſed with money, grants admittance into heaven to the moſt abandoned wretches, which ſhe refuſes to the moſt virtuous for not giving credit to her tricks and fooleries.

If MOLIERE was indeed guilty of that enormous vice, of which you have convicted him upon mere report,‡ Chriſtian or any burial was properly denied him.—If innocent, and refuſed it as a player, I cannot wonder at that exclamation of his wife, which you pronounce blaſphemous:—"What! do they "refuſe a tomb to a man, in whoſe honor "they

† Eſſay, p. 33. ‡ Ibid. p. 32.

" they ſhould erect altars?" for he was ſurely as proper an object of canoniſation, as two thirds of their ſaints and martyrs.

You are for ſhutting up every woman in a country town, as ſoon as ever the Strolling Players are in ſight, whom you brand with a character more corrupt than that of a banditti of thieves and murderers*.—Poor creatures, whoſe greateſt crime is the murder of the parts they attempt!

However, to teſtify my zeal for the welfare of ſociety, I will propoſe a ſcheme of accommodation, which to the unprejudiced reader will, I am perſuaded, be unexceptionable: the inſtant ſtrolling players, or Strolling Fanatics, intrude upon a town to diſturb its peace and good order, let a general alarm be given---

Cape ſaxa manu, cape robora, paſtor!

Raiſe a hue and cry, ſummon the *poſſe comitatûs*, and drive away the declaiming Pantomimes of Stage and Pulpit.

That detail of obſcene and profane anecdotes which cloſes your work, proves that there are bad men in this as in all other profeſſions, but concludes nothing againſt the profeſſion itſelf.——Was I to enumerate the many ſtories I have heard, and which paſs current with the world, of the hypocriſy, luſt, and avarice, of men who pretend to

* Eſſay, p. 35.

outſtrip all the world in piety and religion; I ſhould cenſure myſelf for arguing in an unfair and illiberal manner: was I to brand them with the harſh epithets of Seducers of Mankind, of Inſtruments, Delegates, and Miniſters of Satan; * I ſhould think I went beyond that moderation and decency every one ought to obſerve: but it generally happens, that when an argument is weak, ſcurrility and abuſe are called in to ſupport it.

In your future diſquiſitions I would recommend to you this piece of advice, though it comes from a Dramatic writer---

"Nothing extenuate, nor ſet down aught
"to malice;"

And am,

Your's, &c.

* Eſſay, p. 40, 41, 43.

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